

NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

April 24, 2007

Via Certified Mail, Facsimile, and Email

Ms. Carrie Pourvahidi
Deputy Director
Attn: Palmdale-Los Angeles
California High Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: (916) 322-0827
Email: comments@hsr.ca.gov

***Re: Scoping Comments on Proposed California High-Speed Rail Project
from Palmdale to Los Angeles***

Dear Ms. Pourvahidi:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council ("NRDC"), which has over 1.2 million members and activists, more than 250,000 of whom are Californians, we submit these comments on the Notice of Intent ("NOI") and Notice of Preparation ("NOP") of a Project-Level Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Palmdale to Los Angeles section of the California High-Speed Train ("HST") System. See California State Clearing House #2007031066; 72 Fed. Reg. 12252 (March 15, 2007).

NRDC continues to support the HST project in concept and believes that, if properly planned and implemented, it has enormous potential to enhance both our transportation system and our quality of life in California. Having said that, we have specific concerns with alignments in the Los Angeles area that may severely and unnecessarily impact our river and parks; and we wish to work with the High-Speed Rail Authority ("HSRA") to ensure these concerns are addressed.

For over a decade, residents and interested stakeholders of Los Angeles have worked to create a series of recreational areas, parks, and trails along the Los Angeles River corridor – including Taylor Yard State Park and recreational areas near the Cornfield State Park – in one of the nation's most park-deprived urban regions. It is therefore critical that HST alignments protect these resources, which are of tremendous importance to local communities, and not thwart ongoing revitalization efforts.

With this in mind, we submit the following more detailed comments on the NOI and NOP:

No Identified Alignments

The HSRA has not identified any specific alignments for the Palmdale-to-Los Angeles segment. Rather than determine alignments at the NOI/NOP stage, the HSRA proposes to establish advisory committees to assist in the decisionmaking process with respect to any potential alignment and thereby ensure that a community-friendly alternative is selected.¹ NRDC supports this community-based effort given the sensitive riparian areas, newly-establish parklands, and working-class communities along the Los Angeles River basin. The commitment to find a mutually acceptable alignment will help facilitate the coexistence of vital river revitalization and transportation improvements.

NRDC looks forward to becoming a part of the iterative process and weighing in on the various options, and we request that the HSRA give NRDC an appointment on one of the aforementioned advisory committees.

Feasible Alternatives Outside of the Present *Corridor for Further Study*

In 2005, NRDC worked closely with a coalition of river, park and community advocates to defer selection of a *preferred alignment* between Burbank and Union Station and instead have the area designated as a corridor for further study. *NRDC letter from Tim Grabel to HSRA*, dated January 25, 2005. Our interest has not waned, and with the scoping for service to and from Los Angeles just underway, it is imperative that a full range of alignments are examined to protect these sensitive areas.

NRDC requests that the HSRA not limit the range of alternative alignments under consideration solely to the now designated *corridor for further study*. To do so would improperly limit the alternatives analysis to a very narrow swath along the Los Angeles River—providing nominal differences between alternatives. (Lead agencies have a duty to “rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives.” 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14.) Rather NRDC suggests providing a meaningful selection of alignments by choosing primary alternatives—specific right-of-way alignments—both within and without the *corridor for further study*.

At the same time, the HSRA should consider a range of secondary alternatives for each alignment—e.g., tunnel or trench with retaining walls—in those locations where it is both feasible and necessary to protect community interests. Within the *corridor for further study*, alternatives along existing transportation corridors away from the river –

¹ During the scoping hearings and in scoping materials, HSRA staff noted that a *preferred alignment* had yet to be selected. Alternatives in the scoping notices also were not described in sufficient detail to permit meaningful public comments with respect to determining the full range of alternatives that needs to be examined. NRDC and other stakeholders would like an opportunity, therefore, to provide further input on the scope of alternatives prior to circulation of the draft EIR/EIS.

Ms. Pourvahidi, Deputy Director
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such as along the 5 freeway – are of great importance given their potential to minimize environmental impacts to the Los Angeles river area.

Protection of Ongoing Revitalization Efforts

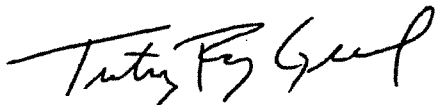
Since the creation of the HSRA, a number of efforts have changed the face of our neglected Los Angeles river area and brought critical revitalization efforts to this working-class community of color. The California Department of Parks and Recreation has created two world-class parks – Taylor Yard and the Cornfield site. The City of Los Angeles and Army Corps of Engineers began historic efforts to create the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, a visionary document that will make our river into a destination, not a thoroughfare. The City of Los Angeles intends to create a specific plan for the area surrounding the Cornfield site, providing critical connections between the river, Chinatown, Olvera Street, and Downtown. And many other efforts exist. Tens of millions of dollars have been spent to date, and countless millions more will be spent in the future. These projects are foreseeable and any impacts thereto must be fully analyzed. Interested stakeholders are committed to ensuring that the HST and other developments do not adversely impact these areas, and incompatible alignments and configurations should not be considered.

Concluding Comments

We appreciate the HSRA's commitment to working collaboratively with the community to determine the best possible HST alignment from Palmdale to Los Angeles. If the HSRA is to select an alignment in the Los Angeles river area that is acceptable to the affected community and numerous other stakeholders, we believe that this cooperative effort, with a full examination of alternatives, potential impacts to our recreational and other environmental resources, and mitigation measures, is essential. We emphasize again the importance of seriously considering an alignment alternative that utilizes the existing I-5 corridor.

We look forward to working with you throughout the environmental review process and beyond. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact Tim Grabel at (310) 434-2300.

Sincerely,



Tim Grabel
Project Attorney

NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL ♦ LATINO URBAN FORUM
FRIENDS OF THE LOS ANGELES RIVER
NORTHEAST LOS ANGELES OPEN SPACE COALITION
CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY MEMBER, 45TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
SOLANO CANYON COMMUNITY RESIDENT
CORNFIELDS STATE PARK ADVISORY ♦ THE RIVER PROJECT
HIGHLAND PARK HERITAGE TRUST ♦ RECONNECTING AMERICA
UCLA INSTITUTE OF THE ENVIRONMENT ♦ LIVABLE PLACES
HEAL THE BAY ♦ LOS ANGELES WALKS
CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION
ARTHUR GOLDING AND ASSOCIATES
CORNFIELD STATE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER
EL SERENO COMMUNITY RESIDENT
LOS ANGELES FORUM FOR ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE GLASSELL PARK IMPROVEMENT
ASSOCIATION ♦ HIGHLAND PARK HERITAGE TRUST
COALITION FOR A STATE PARK AT TAYLOR YARD
SILVER LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ♦ OLIVE BRANCHES
URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INSTITUTE, OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE
ARTSCORPSLA/ACLA, ART..COMMUNITY..LAND..ACTIVISM
CALIFORNIA TRUST FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS
LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY ♦ FRIENDS OF ATWATER VILLAGE ♦

VIA FEDEX/EMAIL/U.S.MAIL

July 14, 2005

Chairperson Joseph E. Petrillo and
Members of the Board
California High-Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: High-Speed Rail Alignment along Taylor Yard, Cornfield Site and LA River

Dear Chairperson Petrillo and Board Members:

On behalf of the undersigned community residents, stakeholders, and public interest organizations, we are writing to express our deep concern regarding the potential designation of a *preferred alignment* for high-speed rail that would severely and unnecessarily impact the Los Angeles River Master Plan, Taylor Yard State Park, and

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recreational areas near the Cornfield State Park. Recently, on June 25th, Assembly Member Jackie Goldberg hosted a community workshop wherein Mehdi Morshed, the Executive Director of the California High-Speed Rail Authority ("HSRA"), presented information on the currently proposed *preferred alignment* for the high-speed rail, and this letter is submitted to register our strong objections to that proposed *preferred alignment*.

For over a decade, residents and interested stakeholders of Los Angeles – and the northeast community in particular – have worked to create a series of recreational areas, parks, and trails along the Los Angeles River corridor in one of the nation's most park-deprived urban regions. The *preferred alignment* through Los Angeles threatens to undo that effort, undermine the State of California's investment in the planned Taylor Yard and Cornfield areas, and adversely impact ongoing Los Angeles River revitalization efforts.

Accordingly, we urge HSRA to defer selection of a *preferred alignment* between Burbank and Union Station. Instead, this area should be formally designated as a corridor for further study, analogous to the recommendation for the Northern Mountain Crossing between San Jose and Merced, for consideration of other feasible route options within the Burbank/Union Station corridor. Such an approach would afford community and interested stakeholders a greater opportunity to assess and comment on the potential impacts to the still evolving Taylor Yard State Park and recreational areas near the Cornfield State Park. Deferral of route selection would also enable HSRA to understand and address potential impacts on the Los Angeles River, which have thus far received too little attention despite ongoing revitalization efforts by numerous stakeholders, including the Ad Hoc River Committee of the Los Angeles City Council.

It would be imprudent to delineate a *preferred alignment* in such a way as to thwart community enjoyment of Taylor Yard or the Cornfield areas, the future conversion of other riparian areas into parkland, and the larger visions of the Los Angeles River revitalization. We believe this is particularly the case in light of potentially less harmful alternatives including, among others, those that further utilize the existing Interstate 5 freeway alignment. We believe, therefore, that a "corridor for further study" designation is a far preferable course in order to ensure responsible alignment selection, and we urge you to adopt it.

Very truly yours,

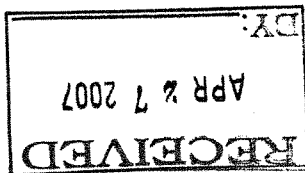
Timothy Grabel, Natural Resources Defense Council
James Rojas, Latino Urban Forum
Lewis McAdams, Friends of the Los Angeles River
Elva Yañez, Northeast Los Angeles Open Space Coalition
Jackie Goldberg, California Assemblymember, 45th Assembly District
Alicia Brown, Solano Canyon Community Resident

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Leonard Pitt, Cornfields State Park Advisory
Melanie Winter, The River Project
Charles Fisher, Highland Park Heritage Trust
Gloria Ohland, Reconnecting America
Mary Nichols, UCLA Institute of the Environment
Ryan Lehman, Livable Places
Leslie Mintz, Heal the Bay
Deborah Murphy, Los Angeles Walks
Sara Feldman, California State Parks Foundation
Arthur Golding, Arthur Golding and Associates
Nicole Possert, Cornfield State Park Advisory Committee Member
Anita Garcia, El Sereno Community Resident
Alan Loomis, Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design
Tony Scudellari, Former President of the Glassell Park Improvement Association
Heather McLarty, Highland Park Heritage Trust
David Brunk, Coalition for a State Park at Taylor Yard
Elizabeth Bougart-Sharkov, Silver Lake Neighborhood Council
Carolyn Ramsay, Olive Branches
Robert Gottlieb, Urban and Environmental Policy Institute, Occidental College
Tricia Ward, ARTScorpsLA/AcLA, Art..Community..Land..Activism
Marc Litchman, California Trust for Public Schools
Garry George, Los Angeles Audubon Society
Annette Carr, Friends of Atwater Village

LATHAM & WATKINS LLP



April 26, 2007

VIA EMAIL AND FEDERAL EXPRESS

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File No. 021662-0011

Re: Notice of Preparation for a Project EIR/EIS for the Palmdale-Los Angeles section of the California High-Speed Train System, SCH #2007031066

Dear Ms. Pourvahidi:

On behalf of our client, Forest Lawn Memorial-Park Association and Forest Lawn Mortuaries (collectively, "Forest Lawn"), we would like to thank you for notifying Forest Lawn of the preparation of a project-level EIR/EIS for the Palmdale to Los Angeles portion of the proposed high-speed rail system. As you can imagine, Forest Lawn, as one of the largest providers of cemetery and mortuary services in the Los Angeles area, is vitally interested in protecting the peace and tranquility of its memorial parks, two of which are located in the general vicinity of the proposed alignment.¹ As a result of this concern for both its memorial parks and the quality of services it provides to the greater Los Angeles Area, we have listed below concerns that should be addressed in the scope of the EIR/EIS for the project. As you will note below, a continuous theme that Forest Lawn is adamant must be addressed in the EIR/EIS is the presence of Forest Lawn's sensitive use in and around the proposed project area.

1. Aesthetics and Light and Glare

Forest Lawn would like to request that aesthetics and light and glare impacts of the proposed project be specifically evaluated to ensure that the peaceful environment can be maintained at both Forest Lawn locations. Distracting light and glare impacts could be especially problematic for regular operations at Forest Lawn, which include daily graveside memorial services subject to interference from both nearby and distant locations.

¹ Forest Lawn Memorial-Park—Glendale ("Forest Lawn Glendale") is located at 1712 South Glendale Avenue, Glendale, while Forest Lawn Memorial-Park—Hollywood Hills ("Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills") is located at 6300 Forest Lawn Drive, Los Angeles.

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In reference to its Glendale location, the memorial park is located directly adjacent to railway property, so aesthetic and light and glare impacts could severely impact the site. It should also be noted that the Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills location is located on a hillside, so that aesthetic and light and glare impacts downhill from the site could significantly affect operations of the memorial park, even from long distances. These potential impacts must be addressed in the EIR/EIS.

2. Land Use and Planning

Forest Lawn requests that the land use and planning impacts of the currently and alternative proposed alignments of the high speed railway be evaluated for their appropriateness given surrounding uses. Especially with respect to Forest Lawn's Glendale site, the proposed use of surrounding railway areas, including the Taylor Yard site, may not be compatible with the recently implemented, existing park use and the direct proximity to Forest Lawn Glendale. Forest Lawn therefore requests that the EIR/EIS examine the potential impacts from these proposed and potential land uses.

3. Noise

Forest Lawn is especially concerned about the potential noise impacts that could result from the implementation of the project near its operating sites. The City of Los Angeles General Plan specifically dictates the noise levels allowable for sensitive uses including memorial park uses, and other applicable standards should be specifically considered to ensure that Forest Lawn is not adversely affected by noise caused by or related to the proposed project. Noise impacts must be carefully and thoroughly studied to ensure that operations at the Forest Lawn sites are not impacted by the proposed project.

4. Transportation and Traffic

Forest Lawn hosts thousands of visitors at each of its sites daily, including those visiting the memorial parks directly from houses of worship, often in funeral processions, for graveside memorial services. As a result, Forest Lawn is deeply concerned about the transportation and traffic impacts that could result from the project.

The proposal to locate the project alignment along San Fernando Road adjacent to Forest Lawn Glendale is especially troubling. The effects of creating additional traffic and noise on this already deeply congested roadway must be considered to ensure that access for emergency personnel—notwithstanding Forest Lawn's specific funeral procession traffic—can access the area. This impact must be considered in addition to all of the other potential traffic impacts that could affect Forest Lawn's vital day-to-day operations at both its Glendale and Hollywood Hills memorial parks.

5. Alternatives

As Forest Lawn is sure you are aware, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. § 303, 23 U.S.C. § 138) prohibits the use of historic sites, parks, wildlife refuges, or recreation areas for federal transportation projects unless there is no "feasible and prudent

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alternative" to using the site, and the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the site.

Forest Lawn requests that the EIR/EIS consider alternatives that protect its locations and other sensitive uses like parks and historic sites, including the nearby Taylor Yard site. The alternatives considered should include an alternative that analyzes undergrounding the high speed rail line when it is adjacent to or in sensitive uses, including Forest Lawn and/or the Taylor Yard park site. Forest Lawn believes that exploration of this alternative, in addition to other alternatives analyzed as part of the EIR/EIS, must be completed to ensure that the document and its analysis complies with federal laws and regulations regarding the placement of transportation projects near sensitive uses like that of Forest Lawn.

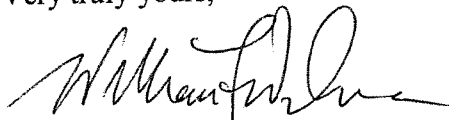
6. Conclusion

While all of the listed considerations are important, Forest Lawn would like to emphasize that all environmental categories of the EIR/EIS should consider the nearby sensitive use that the two area Forest Lawn locations present to the project area. Forest Lawn provides an essential and important community service to the Los Angeles area, and all of the documentation surrounding the proposed project should recognize Forest Lawn's important role in providing and maintaining locally-available memorial park and mortuary services.

Forest Lawn would like to thank the California High Speed Rail Authority for the opportunity to comment on the Project EIR/EIS for the project, and looks forward to working with the Authority to ensure that any proposal is respectful and cognizant of nearby memorial park uses.

Please feel free to contact me directly should you have any questions.

Very truly yours,



William F. Delvac
of LATHAM & WATKINS LLP

cc: Suzanne Davidson, Esq.

Dan Leavitt

From: David Mootchnik [d.mootchnik@worldnet.att.net]
Sent: Friday, April 27, 2007 4:32 PM
To: Dan Leavitt
Subject: Comments on the scoping study

Dear Me Leavitt.

Today, April 27th, is the last day for public comments. I wish to have the following comment put on record.

Having reviewed the appropriate documents, I find the whole idea of the high speed rail line constructed and operated by public funding to be more than absurd. I advise that the whole project be rejected. If a high speed rail line is to be considered it should be developed and operated by a for profit company or consortium and not at taxpayers expense.

Thank you

Dave Mootchnik
Southern California Commuters Forum
www.SCcommuter.com